

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 VO-03 INSE-00 SCA-01 INRE-00 SSO-00

NSCE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-05 NSAE-00 PA-01

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8705

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 18712

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP,PFOR,CVIS,TH (KITTIKACHON, FIELD MARSHAL THANOM)

SUBJ: POSSIBLE RETURN OF THANOM TO THAILAND

REF: A. STATE 260530; B.FBIS D270410Z NOV 74

BEGIN SUMMARY: IT APPEARS MOST LIKELY THAT THE RTG WILL PERMIT EX-PRIME MINISTER THANOM KITTIKACHON AND HIS WIFE TO RETURN TO THAILAND TO VISIT HIS AILING FATHER. THE VISIT WILL BE CONTROVERSIAL DESPITE ANTICIPATED STRICT SECURITY CONTROLS.
END SUMMARY.

ACTION REQUESTED: WHILE WE HAVE NOT YET RECEIVED ANY QUERIES AS TO THANOM'S VISA STATUS, WE BELIEVE STRONGLY THAT, INASMUCH AS THE RTG WILL WANT THANOM AND HIS WIFE TO LEAVE AFTER FIFTEEN DAYS, WE SHOULD PERMIT THEM TO RETURN TO THE U.S. WE ARE PREPARED TO ISSUE B-1B-2 VISAS FOR POLITICAL REASONS UNLESS THE DEPARTMENT OR INS CABLE INSTRUCTIONS TO THE CONTRARY.

1. ON THE EVENING OF NOVEMBER 26, LT GENERAL WITHUN YASAWAT, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR GENERAL OF NATIONAL POLICE, AND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER PRAKOP HUTASING GAVE PRESS CONFERENCES SAYING THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS CONSIDERING ALLOWING THANOM TO RETURN TO THAILAND FOR FIFTEEN DAYS TO VISIT HIS DYING FATHER. HIS WIFE, CHONGKON, WOULD COME
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ALSO TO PRESIDE OVER THE CREMATION OF HER LATE FATHER.

REF B CONTAINS A BANGKOK RADIO ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER'S PRESS CONFERENCE TOGETHER WITH SOME FURTHER DETAILS CONTAINED IN THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE "POST" OF 27 NOVEMBER.

2. OFFICIAL PUBLIC CONFIRMATION THAT THE CABINET HAS APPROVED THE HIGH-LEVEL DECISION HAS PROVEN EXTREMELY ELUSIVE. ALL SPOKESMEN AND OTHER KNOWLEDGEABLE OFFICIALS WHOM WE HAVE ATTEMPTED TO QUERY HAVE BEEN CONSPICUOUSLY UNAVAILABLE. WE DO, HOWEVER, BELIEVE THAT THANOM WILL BE COMING TO THAILAND TO SEE HIS FATHER.

3. ACCORDING TO THE PRESS REPORTS, ONLY THANOM AND CHONGKON WILL BE ALLOWED INTO THE COUNTRY, AND THEY WILL BE CONFINED TO QUARTERS AT DON MUANG AIR BASE. THANOM'S FATHER WILL BE MOVED TO A NEARBY HOSPITAL TO FACILITATE THE FILIAL VISITS. THE GOVERNMENT WILL TAKE STRICT PRECAUTIONS TO PREVENT ANYBODY FROM VISITING THANOM LEST HE ENGAGE IN POLITICAL ACTIVITY.

4. ONE PAPER (DAILY TIME, FORMERLY DAILY NEWS) REPORTED THAT PRIME MINISTER SANYA, GENERAL KRIT SIWARA, POL. GENERAL PRACHUAP SUNTHARANGKUN, AND POLICE LT. GENERAL WITHUN YASAWAT MET WITH HIS MAJESTY THE KING ON THE EVENING OF 25 NOVEMBER REGARDING THE VISIT. THE PAPER DID NOT REPORT THE KING'S POSITION ON THE MATTER.

5. PUBLIC REACTION TO THE POSSIBILITY OF THANOM'S VISIT HAS BEEN CONTROVERSIAL. DEMOCRAT PARTY LEADER SENI PRAMOT AND HIS BROTHER KHUKRIT, LEADER OF THE SOCIAL ACTION PARTY, SYMPATHIZED WITH TANOM'S WISH TO SEE HIS DYING FATHER, BUT ACCORDING TO TODAY'S THAI LANGUAGE PRESS, YOUNGER POLITICIANS, AS WELL AS STUDENT AND LABOR LEADERS, OPPOSE THE VISIT ON THE GROUNDS THAT THANOM SHOULD BE ARRESTED FOR HIS ROLE IN THE OCTOBER 1973 VIOLENCE AND HIS ASSORTED OTHER SINS OF COMMISSION. THERE ARE NO OFFICIAL CHARGES AGAINST THANOM, HOWEVER.

6. COMMENT: SOME OBSERVERS HAVE SUGGESTED THAT IF THANOM COMES, THE RTG MAY HAVE DIFFICULTY IN GETTING HIM TO LEAVE.
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WE LEAVE THAT PROBLEM UP TO THE RTG. WHATEVER THE CASE, DESPITE A THANOM ARRIVAL DURING THE SENSITIVE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION CAMPAIGN, WE DO NOT REGARD THANOM AS A VIABLE POLITICAL RALLYING POINT. HIS PRESENCE WILL UNNERVE SOME THAI, BUT HIS CHANCES FOR RETURN TO A POSITION OF INFLUENCE ARE AT ZERO.
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